



STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Idaho State Department of Education
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SUPERINTENDENT LUNA RECOMMENDS CHANGES TO PHYSICAL EDUCATION

POCATELLO – Recognizing the benefits of regular participation in physical activity, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna proposed Thursday that Idaho make physical education – P.E. – a graduation requirement, which students can meet by taking P.E. classes in school or participating in afterschool sports or activities approved at the local level.

The proposed changes are part of Superintendent Luna's efforts to ensure all Idaho students are prepared for the world that awaits them after graduation.

"Research shows that physical activity, especially when it occurs in school, not only provides many health benefits to students but also leads to better academic performance. Through these changes, we can better ensure all students have equal access to the same opportunities while they are in school," Superintendent Luna said.

Superintendent Luna recommended the proposed changes to administrative rule at the Idaho State Board of Education's meeting in Pocatello. The Board granted initial approval of the proposed rule changes, allowing them to go out for public comment. They will return to the Board in November for final consideration. If approved, the rule changes will go before the Idaho Legislature in January for final approval. It must be approved by at least one body in the Legislature.

According to the American Heart Association, 41 percent of adults in the United States will be obese by 2015. Regular physical education can help prevent this. P.E. is not only associated with many health benefits, such as lower risks of cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity, but studies also show students who participate in P.E. at school perform better in math and reading.

Based on this research and the benefit to students, the Idaho State Department of Education worked with the American Heart Association and the Idaho Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, which represents P.E. teachers across Idaho, to develop requirements for P.E. in Idaho schools at every grade level.

Currently, P.E. is required in elementary and middle grades, but no minimum time requirement exists. In high school, P.E. is required to be offered, but students do not have to take it in order to graduate.

Under the proposed rule change, the state would require a minimum of 60 minutes per week of P.E. in elementary grades and a minimum of 200 minutes per week in the middle grades.

In high school, students would take at least 2 credits of P.E. in order to graduate. Superintendent Luna made sure the new proposed credit requirement provides Idaho students with the flexibility to show mastery and earn at least one of their two required credits by playing a sport or other activity outside the school day. The activity must be sanctioned by the Idaho High School Activities Association or approved by the local school district.

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The majority of Idaho school districts are already meeting these proposed recommendations, with 77 percent of Idaho school districts reporting they require high school students to take P.E. at the local level before graduation.

“The P.E. and CPR proposal being considered by the Board of Education today is critical to the heart health of all Idahoans. Almost a third of Idaho students are overweight or obese, while the number of students taking P.E. is decreasing. Several studies have indicated that this generation of youth may be the first generation to have a shorter lifespan than their parents. P.E. teaches students how to be physically active for a lifetime and how to integrate exercise into their daily lives,” said Adrean Cavener, Director of Government Relations for the Idaho American Heart Association.

“Idaho Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance was given a great opportunity to partner with the American Heart Association to improve the fitness and health levels of Idaho’s youth. Currently, Idaho does not have graduation requirements for physical education at the high school level nor does the state require a minimum weekly amount of physical activity time for elementary or middle school students. IAHPERD, along with several Idaho Physical Education Teachers, crafted this rule change to allow Idaho teachers more student contact time to improve Idaho’s youth fitness levels which will enhance academic performance,” said Trudy Weaver, President of the Idaho Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

The Department also worked with the American Heart Association and the Idaho Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance to develop a proposed rule that requires CPR training in at least one period of health class during high school.

Nearly 383,000 people have cardiac arrest outside of a hospital every year, and only 11 percent survive, most likely because they do not receive timely CPR. Given right away, CPR doubles or triples survival rates. Teaching students CPR could save lives by filling our community with lifesavers – those trained to give sudden cardiac arrest victims the immediate help they need to survive until first responders arrive.

The goal of the new CPR requirement is to make sure every Idaho student receives hands-on training in health class before they graduate from high school. This requirement will not be an added cost to schools or districts. Under the proposed rule, CPR can be taught by local first responders, hospitals, or other community educators, typically at little or no cost to the school. Students will not have to complete a proficiency exam in order to graduate.

“Integrated into the already existing health class, this initiative would produce thousands of students ready, willing and able to save lives. This is imperative because four out of five cardiac arrests occur at home, so people who administer CPR are most likely saving the lives of family and friends,” Cavener with the Idaho American Heart Association said.

If approved by the Board and Legislature, these changes would be effective for the Class of 2019 (students entering 9th grade in Fall 2015).

To see the proposed rule in its entirety, visit the Idaho State Board of Education’s website at <http://bit.ly/1daXyx7>.

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